



**FEMA**

# News Release

SEPTEMBER 21, 2011  
MA-DR-4028—NR - 014  
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## **FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE DOES NOT AFFECT ANY OTHER SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

Receiving Social Security benefits and other forms of government aid should not prevent residents in Berkshire and Franklin counties from applying for or receiving disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"A federal grant will not add to taxable income, as long as the grant is given as assistance to recover from a disaster," said Federal Coordinating Officer James N. Russo. "This means that receiving disaster aid will not affect Social Security benefits."

Additionally, FEMA assistance will not affect income levels for an individual's eligibility for Medicaid or food stamps. FEMA grants do not have to be repaid by the recipient. Those who have damage and losses as a result of Tropical Storm Irene do not have to choose between social service benefits and FEMA disaster assistance. They can receive both.

Individuals should register with FEMA to find out about services that may be available to them. Call FEMA at

**1-800-621-FEMA (3362)** from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Those with a speech or hearing impairment can call (TTY) **1-800-462-7585**. Registration can also be completed online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or by smartphone at [m.fema.gov](http://m.fema.gov).

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*FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*